**Higher-Level Review**

Decision Review lane (form 20-0996)

What is it?

If a Veteran or their representative disagrees with the VA’s decision, they can request to have a senior reviewer take a new look at their case. The reviewer will determine whether the decision can be changed based on a difference of opinion or an error.

Currently, Veterans or their representatives are able to submit a Higher-Level Review paper form. This guide is for the Higher-Level Review online form which is anticipated to launch in December 2021.

**How do users access this tool?**

Users are able to access this tool via the decision review directory on va.gov:

Decision Reviews 🡪 Higher Level Review

<https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/>

If they end up on the Higher-Level Review landing page, they will be presented with the option to complete the form online:

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A user will be able to directly access the form (if logged in) by typing this into the URL:

<https://www.va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/request-higher-level-review-form-20-0996/>

After either clicking the button or directly navigating to the form introduction page, they will be routed to a screen that determines their eligibility for an HLR by asking a few short questions. We call this tool ‘The Wizard.’

The ‘Wizard’

When entering the wizard, the user will be prompted to answer some questions that will determine their eligibility. If their goals are not possible to achieve via the form, they will be instead be routed to the appropriate action or information. This is what the user will see when encountering the Wizard tool:

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Currently, we are only accepting compensation claims as part of the online form (dated: 1/26/2021). In the future we will be accepting other claim types.

If a user is trying to apply for a benefit type other than compensation, they will see this message:

Graphical user interface, application, Teams

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Otherwise, when selecting a ‘disability compensation claim, they will be given the next question to determine eligibility for the online form:

Graphical user interface, text, application, email

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If a user is unsure about whether they are going through the legacy appeals process, they can find more information at the link provided. If they self-determine to be in the legacy appeals process, they will be greeted with this message:

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If they choose ‘no’ to the legacy appeal question, then they are greeted with an alert that says they can begin the form online:

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Upon clicking the ‘Request a Higher-Level Review online’ button, the user will be taken the to [introduction page for the form](https://va.gov/decision-reviews/higher-level-review/request-higher-level-review-form-20-0996/introduction).

What if a user is not logged in?

In order to access the online form, a user must be signed into their account. If they reach this page and are not signed in, they will be given the opportunity to sign in via a call-to-action button on the information page.

A screenshot of a cell phone

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After signing in, the user will be redirected to that page and they can continue on the process outlined below.

**Inside the Higher Level Review form**

**Step 1 of 5: Veteran Details**

Once inside the form, the user will encounter a section to confirm, update or add their personal information.

**STEP 1**

**Screen one: Personal information**

Once inside the form, the first screen the user will encounter is a section to confirm or update their contact information.

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The only form actions a user can take on this screen are to either go back or continue.

**STEP 1**

**Screen two: Contact information**

The next screen within the form will be for the user to confirm or edit their contact information.

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The only possible user interaction here is to click ‘update this information on your profile page’ which takes the user out of the form flow to update their contact information on their profile page.

**Step 2 of 5: Contested Issues**

The user will then select the issues they wish to contest for the Higher Level Review.

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The fields are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| Contestable issue (user must select at least one from the list) - checkbox | Yes |

**State changes**

When a user selects a contestable issue, it looks like this:

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**Step 3 of 5: Office of review**

The user has the option to request the same office to conduct the review their claim. In the screen below, the user has ‘yes’ or ‘no’ options in response:

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|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| Yes | Yes – one selection required |
| No | Yes – one selection required |

**Step 4 of 5: Informal conference**

The user has the option to request a phone call between themselves / their accredited representative and the reviewer to discuss why they believe the decision should be changed and identify factual errors.

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The fields are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| No, I do not want an informal conference – radio button | Yes – one selection required |
| Yes, call me to schedule an informal conference – radio button | Yes – one selection required |
| Yes, call my representative – radio button | Yes – one selection required |

**The user must choose one option here.**

**State changes**

**Option 1 – No, I do not want an informal conference**

When a user chooses option 1, it looks like this:

**A screenshot of a social media post

Description automatically generated**

There is no further requirement from the user.

**Option 2 – Yes, call me to schedule an informal conference**

If a user selects the option of ‘yes, call me to schedule an informal conference’ then they will be prompted to select a time they are available to receive a phone call to schedule the informal conference (this is NOT the informal phone conference itself). This is essentially a phone call to schedule a phone call. This is a required field – the user must select at least one time they are available to receive a call.

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The user is required to fill in at least one of the time fields.

The available selections are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – at least one selection required |
| 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – at least one selection required |
| 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – at least one selection required |
| 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – at least one selection required |

At this point, there is no further requirement from the user.

**Option 3 – Yes, call my representative**

When the user selects call my representative, they are asked to fill in a few more details so the VA is able to get into contact with their representative. First, they will be asked to fill in their representative’s contact details:

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The fields are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| Representative’s Name | Yes |
| Representative’s phone number | Yes |

The user will then be prompted to select a time their representative is available to receive a phone call to schedule the informal conference (this is NOT the informal phone conference itself). This is essentially a phone call to schedule a phone call. This is a required field – the user must select at least one time their representative is available to receive a call.

Graphical user interface, text, application

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The fields are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – one selection required |
| 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – one selection required |
| 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – one selection required |
| 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET – checkbox | Yes – one selection required |

**Step 4 of 4: Review & Submit Application**

The user has the opportunity to review the information and confirm the accuracy or edit as needed.

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**State changes**

The user is able to open each accordion on the review screen.

**Accordion - Veteran information**

**Table

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**

The user is able to click the ‘edit on profile’ button and edit information as needed. A new tab will open and allow them to edit the information without leaving the form flow.

**Accordion - Contested Issues**

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**Contested Issues – Edit**

The user is able to click the edit button and edit information as needed. Field requirements are the same as step 2: Contested Issues (see pages 9-11). They can select or deselect any available issues and click ‘update page’ to perform an edit.

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**Accordion – Office of review**

Graphical user interface, application

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**Office of review - Edit**

The user is able to click the edit button and change their response. Field requirements are the same as step 3: Office of review (see page 12).

**Accordion – Informal conference**

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**Informal conference – Edit**

The user is able to click the edit button and edit information as needed (seen on the next page). Field requirements are the same as step 4: Informal conference (see pages 13-19).

**Informal conference – edit – request an informal conference**

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**Informal conference – edit – contact information (if selecting representative)**

**Graphical user interface, text, application, email

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**Informal conference – edit – availability**

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Note: this content will change based upon a user’s selection. If a user previously selected ‘yes, call me to schedule an informal conference’, then the content would reflect that (i.e. “please indicate *your* availability” or “we’ll make two attempts to call *you*”, etc).

**Outside of the accordions, there is one field:**

**Graphical user interface, website

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This field is required to submit the application.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Field | Required |
| I have read and accept the Privacy Policy | Yes |

**Submit**

When the user has satisfied all of the field requirements and is ready to submit the form, they can click the ‘submit application’ button at the bottom of the review page.

**A close up of a logo

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Which will take them to the submission confirmation page (seen on next page).

**Submission confirmation**

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